

Application/Control Number: 08/973,293

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claims pto

2/2/07

L.ellis

Art Unit: \*\*\*

1. Integrated circuit (IC) module/apparatus for dispensing postage for a mail piece comprising:
- a memory for storing first data representative of a value of postage funds;
  - an interface for receiving selected information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage, the value of the postage funds being a function of the value of the postage; and
  - a processor for encrypting at least the selected information to generate second data, the first data and the second data being provided for creation of a postage indicium indicative of payment of the postage.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said second data includes a digital signature.
3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said memory further includes an encryption algorithm, said selected information being encrypted in accordance with said encryption algorithm.
4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said encryption algorithm is an RSA algorithm.
5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said encryption algorithm is a digital signature algorithm (DSA).
6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said memory includes information for determining past postage dispensation.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the value of the postage funds is charged in response to a purchase.

8. Apparatus for generating a content of a mail piece, said mail piece including a cover for enclosing said content, said apparatus comprising:
- an input for receiving data representative of at least said content, said data excluding a value of cost of delivery of said mail piece;
  - a processor for computing the cost of delivery of said mail piece based on said data; and
  - an output for generating said content based on said data, and applying at least an indicator indicative of the computed cost onto said content at a selected location thereof.
9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said cost includes postage for delivering said mail piece.
10. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said indicator includes a postage indicium.
11. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said indicator is applied onto said content close to an address.
12. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein information concerning said cost is read by a scanner's scanning said indicator.
13. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said cover is an envelope.
14. The apparatus of claim 11 wherein said envelope has at least one window coinciding with said indicator such that at least part of said indicator exposes through the at least one window.
15. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein at least part of said data is indicative of the selected location.

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16. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the selected location is a corner of said content.
17. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information for determining a weight of said content.
18. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information concerning pagination of the content.
19. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information concerning an addressee.
20. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said information includes zip code information.
21. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor derives, from said data, information for identifying at least one party to which said cost is attributed.
22. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said processor computes said cost based on one or more selected shipping rates.
23. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a memory for storing a database.
24. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said database includes statistical information based on said cost.
25. The apparatus of claim 23 wherein said database includes information identifying said mail piece for tracking thereof.

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1. Apparatus for processing a mail piece for which postage needs to be dispensed before delivery of the mail piece comprising:  
 an interface for obtaining from the mail piece selected information appearing on the mailing piece; and  
 a processor responsive to at least the selected information for determining whether to dispense the postage.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said interface includes a connector for connecting a scanner to said apparatus.

3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the selected information is represented by a bar-code on said mail piece.

4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the selected information includes data identifying an originator of said mail piece.

5. The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the processor disallows a dispensation of the postage when said originator is determined to be unauthorized to expend the postage.

6. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the originator is an individual.

7. The apparatus of claim 5 wherein the originator is an organization.

8. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the selected information includes information representative of an authorization code.

9. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a receiver for receiving data representative of most of said delivery.

10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the processor determines whether to dispense the postage also in response to said data.

16. (currently amended) A postage indicium processing system comprising at least a postage indicium dispensing apparatus, the postage indicium dispensing apparatus comprising:

a processor for creating a postage indicium for processing by a first party, the postage indicium including:

a proof of payment, the service by a first party, and  
 transactional data comprising at least information representative of a transaction amount,

the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to a second party in response to at least the transactional data when the first party processes the postage indicium;

and  
 an output for generating said postage indicium;

wherein the first party is a consumer service or a postal authority, and the second party is a bank.

17. (original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said transactional data includes information identifying said second party.

18. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein said transactional data includes information concerning an originator of said postage indicium.

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39. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said transactional data includes an indicator indicative of a method by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.
40. (original) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein said method includes an electronic funds transfer.
41. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said transactional data includes a personal identification number (PIN).
42. (original) The apparatus of claim 41 wherein said PIN is encrypted.
43. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said transactional data includes instructional information, the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second party in response to the instructional information.
44. (original) The apparatus of claim 43 wherein said instructional information includes a request for a confirmation by the first party to the second party that the transaction amount has been paid.
45. (original) The apparatus of claim 43 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.
46. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.
47. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar-code.
48. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.
49. (original) The apparatus of claim 48 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.
50. (original) The apparatus of claim 48 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.
51. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.
52. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said first party is a postal authority.
53. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said first party is a customer other than a postal authority.
54. (original) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.
55. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a tangible medium.
56. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 55 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.
57. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a mail piece.

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50. (Currently amended) The system of claim 46 further comprising a postage indicium processing apparatus, the postage indicium processing apparatus comprising:

a processor for processing ~~at least one~~ the postage indicium including a proof of payment, for service by a first party, and the transactional data comprising at least information representative of a transaction amount; and

an output responsive to at least said the transactional data for causing ~~said the~~ transaction amount to be paid to a second party when the postage indicium is processed.

51. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 50 wherein said postage indicium appears on a mail piece.

52. (Original) The apparatus of claim 50 wherein said processor causes said mail piece to be delivered according to an address appearing on said mail piece.

53. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 50 wherein said processor includes a scanner for scanning at least part of said postage indicium.

54. (Original) The apparatus of claim 53 wherein said transactional data includes information identifying said second party.

55. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 54 wherein said transactional data includes information concerning an originator of said postage indicium.

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64. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes an indicator indicative of a method by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

65. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said method includes an electronic funds transfer.

66. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes a PIN.

67. (Original) The apparatus of claim 66 wherein said PIN is encrypted.

68. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data includes instructional information, the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second party in response to said instructional information.

69. (Original) The apparatus of claim 68 wherein said instructional information includes a request for a confirmation by the first party to the second party that the transaction amount has been paid.

70. (Original) The apparatus of claim 68 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

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71. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.

72. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar-code.

73. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.

74. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.

75. (Original) The apparatus of claim 73 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.

76. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.

77. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said first party is a postal authority.

78. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said first party is a courier other than a postal authority.

79. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.

80. (Original) The apparatus of claim 58 wherein said postage indicium is fixed on a tangible medium.

81. (Original) The apparatus of claim 80 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.

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5 8. A system for dispensing postage for a mail piece  
 comprising:  
 an IC module comprising a memory for storing first  
 data representative of a value of postage funds; an  
 interface for receiving selected information concerning  
 the mail piece and information concerning a value of the  
 postage, the value of the postage funds being a function  
 10 of the value of the postage; and a processor for  
 encrypting at least the selected information to generate  
 second data; and  
 an output for generating a postage indicium  
 15 indicative of payment of the postage based on at least  
 the first data and the second data.  
 89. The system of claim 88 further comprising a  
 computer.  
 20 90. The system of claim 89 wherein said computer is a  
 personal computer (PC).  
 91. The system of claim 89 further comprising a control  
 25 element for controlling access to said system.  
 92. The system of claim 92 further comprising a  
 management information subsystem for processing  
 documents.  
 30 93. The system of claim 92 wherein said documents  
 include invoices.  
 94. The system of claim 92 further comprising an address  
 35 cleaner for checking address information on the mail  
 piece.

89. The system of claim 82 further comprising a second  
 interface for obtaining shipping rate information.  
 90. The system of claim 82 further comprising a second  
 5 interface for communicating with a remote computer.  
 91. The system of claim 82 further comprising a second  
 interface for establishing a connection to a  
 communication network.  
 10 92. The system of claim 91 wherein said communication  
 network includes at least part of the Internet.  
 93. The system of claim 92 further comprising a  
 15 communicator for communicating information with a  
 selected recipient.  
 94. The system of claim 93 wherein said communicator  
 communicates with a certification authority other than  
 20 the selected recipient to verify receipt by the selected  
 recipient of the information.  
 95. The system of claim 93 wherein said communicator  
 communicates with a certification authority other than  
 25 the selected recipient to verify access by the selected  
 recipient to the information.  
 96. The system of claim 82 wherein said second data  
 includes a digital signature.  
 30 97. The system of claim 82 further comprising a  
 transmitter for transmitting facsimile information.  
 98. The system of claim 97 wherein said facsimile  
 35 information is encrypted.

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99. The system of claim 97 wherein said facsimile information includes a digital signature for authenticating the facsimile transmission.
100. The system of claim 97 further comprising a receiver for receiving facsimile information.
101. The system of claim 100 wherein said facsimile information is encrypted, said receiver includes a decoder for decrypting the encrypted facsimile information.
102. The system of claim 100 wherein said facsimile information includes a digital signature, said receiver includes a mechanism for verifying said digital signature.
103. The system of claim 97 wherein said server further includes an encryption algorithm, said selected information being encrypted in accordance with said encryption algorithm.
104. The system of claim 103 wherein said encryption algorithm is an RSA algorithm.
105. The system of claim 103 wherein said encryption algorithm is a DESA.
106. The system of claim 97 wherein said memory includes information for determining past postage dispensation.
107. A method for use in an IC module for dispensing postage for a mail piece comprising the steps of:  
storing first data representative of a value of postage funds;

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receiving selected information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage, the value of the postage funds being a function of the value of the postage;

- 5     encrypting at least the selected information to generate second data; and  
       providing the first data and the second data for creation of a postage indicium indicative of payment of the postage.

10    102. The method of claim 101 wherein said second data includes a digital signature.

15    109. The method of claim 101 wherein said selected information is encrypted in accordance with an encryption algorithm.

20    110. The method of claim 109 wherein said encryption algorithm is an RSA algorithm.

25    111. The method of claim 109 wherein said encryption algorithm is a DES.

      112. The method of claim 101 wherein the value of the stored postage funds is changed in response to a purchase.

- 30    113. A method for generating a content of a mail piece, said mail piece including a cover for enclosing said content, said method comprising the steps of:  
       receiving data representative of at least said content, said data excluding a value of cost of delivery of said mail piece;  
       computing the cost of delivery of said mail piece based on said data;  
       generating said content based on said data; and

applying at least an indicator indicative of the computed cost to said content at a selected location thereof

- 5    114. The method of claim 113 wherein said cost includes postage for delivering said mail piece.

115. The method of claim 113 wherein said indicator includes a postage indicium.

- 10    116. The method of claim 113 wherein said indicator is applied onto said content close to an address.

117. The method of claim 113 wherein said cover is an envelope.

- 15    118. The method of claim 117 wherein said envelope has at least one window coinciding with said indicator such that at least part of said indicator extends through the at least one window.

20    119. The method of claim 113 wherein at least part of said data is indicative of the selected location.

120. The method of claim 119 wherein the selected location is a corner of said content.

- 25    121. The method of claim 119 wherein information for determining a weight of said content is derived from said data.

122. The method of claim 113 wherein information concerning pagination of the content is derived from said data.

- 30    123. The method of claim 113 wherein information concerning an address is derived from said data.

124. The method of claim 123 wherein said information includes zip code information.

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135. The method of claim 113 wherein information for identifying at least one party to which said cost is attributed is derived from said data.

136. The method of claim 113 wherein said cost is computed based on one or more selected shipping rates.

137. The method of claim 113 further comprising the step of storing a database.

138. The method of claim 137 wherein said database includes statistical information based on said cost.

139. The method of claim 137 wherein said database includes information identifying said mail piece for tracking thereof.

140. A method for processing a mail piece for which postage needs to be dispensed before delivery of the mail piece comprising the steps of:

obtaining from the mail piece selected information appearing on the mailing piece; and  
determining whether to dispense the postage in response to at least the selected information.

141. The method of claim 140 wherein the selected information is represented by a bar-code on said mail piece.

142. The method of claim 140 wherein the selected information includes data identifying an originator of said mail piece.

143. The method of claim 142 wherein the a dispensation of the postage is disallowed when said originator is determined to be unauthorized to expend the postage.

144. The method of claim 142 wherein the originator is an individual.

145. The method of claim 142 wherein the originator is an organization.

146. The method of claim 140 wherein the selected information includes information representative of an authorization code.

147. The method of claim 146 further comprising the step of receiving data representative of cost of said delivery.

148. The method of claim 147 wherein whether to dispense the postage is determined also in response to said data.

139. (currently amended) A method for dispensing payments comprising the steps of:  
creating a postage indicium for processing by a first party; the postage indicium including:

a proof of payment, for services by said party; and  
transactional data comprising at least information representative of a transaction amount;

the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to a second party in response to at least the transactional data when the first party processes the postage indicium; and

generating the postage indicium;

wherein the first party is a carrier service or a postal authority, and the second party is a payee.

140. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes information identifying said second party.

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141. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes information concerning an originator of said postage indicium.

142. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes an indicator indicative of a methodology by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

143. (original) The method of claim 142 wherein said methodology includes an electronic funds transfer.

144. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes a PIN.

145. (original) The method of claim 144 wherein said PIN is encrypted.

146. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data includes instructional information, the first party causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second party in response to the instructional information.

147. (original) The method of claim 146 wherein said instructional information includes a request for a confirmation by the first party to the second party that the transaction amount has been paid.

148. (original) The method of claim 146 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

149. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.

150. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar code.

151. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.

152. (original) The method of claim 151 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.

153. (original) The method of claim 151 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.

154. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.

155. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein said first party is a postal authority.

156. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said first party is a counter other than a postal authority.

157. (original) The method of claim 139 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.

158. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a tangible medium.

159. (original) The method of claim 158 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.

160. (previously presented) The method of claim 139 wherein said postage indicium is generated onto a mail piece.

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361. A postage processing method comprising the steps of:  
 processing at least one postage indicium including a  
 proof of payment for service by a first party, and  
 transactional data comprising at least information  
 representative of a transaction amount; and  
 causing, in response to at least said transactional  
 data, said transaction amount to be paid to a second  
 party when the postage indicium is processed.

162. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage  
 indicium appears on a mail piece.

163. The method of claim 162 wherein said mail piece is  
 delivered according to an address appearing on said mail  
 piece.

164. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional  
 data includes information identifying said second party.

165. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional  
 data includes information concerning an originator of  
 said postage indicium.

166. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional  
 data includes an indicator indicative of a methodology by  
 which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.

167. The method of claim 166 wherein said methodology  
 includes an electronic funds transfer.

168. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional  
 data includes a PIN.

169. The method of claim 168 wherein said PIN is  
 encrypted.

170. The method of claim 161 wherein said transactional  
 data includes instructional information, the first party  
 causing the transaction amount to be paid to the second  
 party in response to said instructional information.

171. The method of claim 170 wherein said instructional  
 information includes a request for a confirmation by the  
 first party to the second party that the transaction  
 amount has been paid.

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170. The method of claim 169 wherein said instructional information includes information on a date by which the transaction amount is paid to the second party.
- 37 171. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium includes a digital signature for authenticating at least part of said postage indicium.
- 93  
174. The method of claim 173 wherein said transactional data is encoded in a bar code.
- 38 175. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium includes a human readable portion.
- 113  
176. The method of claim 175 wherein said human readable portion includes information identifying said second party.
- 112  
177. The method of claim 176 wherein said human readable portion includes the transaction amount.
- 37 178. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium includes a machine readable portion.
- 95  
179. The method of claim 178 wherein said first party is a postal authority.
- 14 180. The method of claim 179 wherein said second party is a courier other than the postal authority.
- 99  
181. The method of claim 181 wherein the amount of said payment for service is zero.
- 105  
182. The method of claim 161 wherein said postage indicium is fixed on a tangible medium.

- 104 183. The method of claim 182 wherein said tangible medium includes a label.
184. A method for use in a system for dispensing postage for a mail piece, said system including an IC module, comprising the steps of:  
storing first data representative of a value of postage funds in the IC module;  
receiving by the IC module selected information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage, the value of the postage funds being a function of the value of the postage;  
encrypting by the IC module at least the selected information to generate second data; and  
generating a postage indicium indicative of payment of the postage based on at least the first data and the second data.
185. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of controlling access to said system.
186. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of checking address information on the mail piece.
187. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of obtaining shipping rate information.
188. The method of claim 184 further comprising the step of communicating information with a selected recipient.
189. The method of claim 188 wherein the communicating step includes the step of communicating with a certification authority other than the selected recipient to verify receipt by the selected recipient of the information.

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190. The method of claim 181 wherein the communicating step including the step of communication with a certification authority other than the selected recipient to verify accuracy of the selected recipient to the information.

191. The method of claim 184 wherein said second data includes a digital signature.

192. A method for sending a mail piece comprising the steps of:  
 indicating on the mail piece information concerning a content in the mail piece; and  
 providing on the mail piece an indicator for affirming that the content is included in the mail piece, said indicator causing a processor of the mail piece to inform a third party of the information while the mail piece is being sent.

193. The method of claim 192 wherein the content includes a payment.

194. The method of claim 193 wherein the information includes an amount of the payment.

195. The method of claim 192 wherein the third party is an addressee of the mail piece.

196. The method of claim 192 wherein the indicator includes a digital signature.

197. The method of claim 192 wherein the information is encrypted.

198. The method of claim 192 wherein the information is incorporated in a postage indicium.

199. (New) The method of claim 198 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount.

200. (New) The method of claim 192 wherein the indicium affirms that the content is included in the mail piece.

201. (New) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the indicium includes a postage amount.

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11/37  
348  
224  
Control

[Add Claim 202]  
11  
202 (New)  
amount --

33  
The apparatus of claim 32 wherein the indicium includes a postage

[Add Claim 203]  
74  
203 (New)  
amount --

44  
The method of claim 32 wherein the indicium includes a postage

[Add Claim 204]  
89  
204 (New)  
amount --

89  
The method of claim 32 wherein the indicium includes a postage

[Add Claim 205]  
121  
205 (New)  
amount --

121  
The method of claim 32 wherein the indicium includes a postage

[Add Claim 206]  
206 (New)

The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising a generator for generating the indicator indicative of the (206) (206) (206) the cover --

[Add Claim 207]  
207 (New)

The method of claim 113 further comprising the step of generating the indicator onto the cover --

[Add Claim 208]  
21  
208 (New)  
company --

9  
The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said second party is a utility

[Add Claim 209]  
49  
209 (New)  
company --

49  
The apparatus of claim 36 wherein said second party is a utility

[Add Claim 210]  
124  
210 (New)

113  
The method of claim 32 wherein said third party is a utility

211. (new) The system of claim 38, wherein the originator is a payer of the transaction amount.

212. (new) The method of claim 101, wherein the originator is a payer of the transaction amount.

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